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SUBJECT: BEMBA'S MLC WINS HALF OF KINSHASA'S SENATE SEATS

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¶1. (U) Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC won four of eight seats in Kinshasa's senatorial delegation in a vote by provincial assembly deputies January 19. Bemba himself came first in the poll of the 48 deputies, followed closely by MLC officials Bernadette Nkoy Mafuta and Eve Bazaiba. President Kabila's PPRD won two seats, with Azarias Ruberwa's RCD and an independent candidate splitting the remaining pair.

¶2. (U) The Kinshasa delegation in the new Senate will include two current ministers, Moise Nyarugabo (RCD) and Romain Namy (MLC), and two former governors of Kinshasa, Nkoy Mafuta (MLC), who served in the Mobutu era, and David Nku Imbie (PPRD), a Joseph Kabila appointee. The MLC's Nkoy Mafuta and Bazaiba will be two of only five women in the 108-member Senate.

¶3. (U) Of the 241 Kinshasa candidates listed for the Senate, only 13 received votes. Each deputy was allowed to cast a single vote, and the 27 from the MLC maintained party discipline to elect four of their eight candidates. They gave nine votes to Bemba, eight each to Nkoy Mafuta and Bazaiba, and two to Namy. The PPRD elected two of its five candidates with a total of 10 votes, despite counting only eight deputies in the 48-member assembly.

¶4. (U) A prominent casualty of the vote was former presidential candidate Wivine Nlandu, who ran as an independent. She had joined Bemba's Union pour la Nation campaign coalition as permanent secretary, and, running outside her natural constituency in Bas-Congo, received no votes. Key Kabila allies, including Mbusa Nyamwisi's Forces du Renouveau and Mobutu Nzanga's UDEMO, had no deputies in the assembly and were likewise shut out.

¶5. (U) Biographical information:

Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo (MLC)

MLC president Bemba, 44, asserts ambitions to create a viable political opposition to the new government. He finished second to Joseph Kabila in the October presidential elections. Bemba was vice president for economic and financial affairs during the transition. He once commanded forces which controlled almost one-third of the country before agreeing at Sun City to convert the MLC from a rebel movement to a political party. He retains interest in major Congolese transportation and communications enterprises. The son of Jeannot Bemba, one of Congo's richest men, he was educated in Belgium for 20 years and has a degree in economics from the Catholic Institute of Commerce. Born November 4, 1962.

Bernadette Nkoy Mafuta (MLC)

Nkoy Mafuta, 58, is MLC national secretary for women's issues. During the presidential campaign she was in charge of public relations for Bemba's electoral coalition, l'Union pour la Nation (UN). She was governor of Kinshasa from August 1996 to May 1997 and is remembered for promoting public health programs before being replaced by a military governor in the final days of the Mobutu era. Born October 14, 1948.

Eve Bazaiba Masudi (MLC)

Bazaiba, 41, is a former UDPS official who was expelled from the party for running for the National Assembly in the July 2006 elections. After failing in her bid for an Assembly seat, she joined Bemba's UN. She gained notoriety during the campaign for incendiary statements questioning the integrity of the electoral process. Born August 12, 1966.

Moise Nyarugabo Muhizi (RCD)

Nyarugabo, 41, was named transitional economy minister in October 2006. Previously leader of the RCD parliamentary group, he was an unsuccessful National Assembly candidate in the July legislative elections. A Tutsi lawyer from Uvira, South Kivu, he was formerly director of the RCD department of justice, human rights and conflict resolution. He was director of OBMA, Laurent Kabilas "office of ill-gotten gains," before breaking with Kabilas and joining the RCD rebellion. Unlike many in the RCD, he appears to have maintained loyalty to RCD president Ruberwa. Born January 5, 1966.

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David Nku Imbie (PPRD)

Nku Imbie, 54, is medical director of the Salvation Army's Congo branch and a practicing physician. He served as governor of Kinshasa from June 2002 to May 2004. Born July 28, 1952.

Ignace Ndebo a Kanda (PPRD)

Ndebo, 53, is president of the PPRD youth league. He is the son of former Kivu Governor Ndebo a Kanda de ne Nkega, a staunch Mobutist from Equateur. Born December 29, 1953.

Romain Nimy Tembo (MLC)

Nimy, 49, was named transitional agriculture minister in October 2006. He is MLC national secretary for reform issues. He served as chief of staff to his late brother Roger during the latter's time as youth and sports minister. He was a signatory to the November 2006 public appeal by Bakongo notables for pre-trial release of Bemba associate Marie-Therese Nlandu, detained on charges of subversion. Born July 22, 1957.

Innocent Nkongo Budini Nzau (Independent)

Nkongo, 57, has not been previously active in politics. A practicing lawyer, he is the senior attorney accredited before the Kinshasa-Gombe court of appeals. He is the current secretary-general of the Franco-Congolese chamber of commerce and industry. Born November 5, 1949.

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